



3

Experiencing the Heritage Corridor

HISTORY, PRESERVATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

In the early part of the 19th century, America was in the midst of a second revolution. In many ways it was a quiet revolution, one that has gone largely unsung and uncelebrated. Yet it was a revolution that profoundly and permanently changed the way Americans live. It transformed a provincial agrarian society into an industrial giant, moved whole populations off the farm and into the factories, and altered our relationship with land, time and with each other. In time, it altered the landscape and affected nearly every aspect of daily life.

The Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor is an incredible collection of historic buildings and roadways, industrial landscapes — mills, mill villages, mill ponds and reservoirs, canal remnants, and agricultural landscapes. Many of these elements are still there — although they're not understood as the system that they once were, because the time when it was a working system has just about passed from living memory. Such an understanding is just below the surface of our modern-day consciousness. The key is to re-surface that historic system — to return it to prominence — not as a working industrial landscape, but as a recognizable and understandable spine. We can use this spine to connect the many wonderful resources and amenities that are important to us today so that people can better understand the role the Blackstone Valley has played in our nation's development.



The Commission intends to complete its development of the principal visitor centers — those destinations that are fully programmed for visitor orientation and historic in their own right, like River Bend Farm with its restored section of the Blackstone Canal.

How we go about telling this significant story and preserving special places involves many different strategies and partners. The Commission and its partners have invested in projects that both preserve heritage sites as well as develop facilities that provide visitor services and interpretation of our heritage. A primary strategy that the Commission will continue to implement is the development of a series of major visitor centers and museums linked to the industrial heritage of the Blackstone Valley. Several centers offering different themes and levels of visitor services (rather than one central center) are necessary because there is no one “entrance” into the Corridor. Visitors will arrive through “gateway” communities such as Pawtucket, Gloucester, Woonsocket, Hopedale, Douglas and Worcester. From these points visitors will be directed, via extensive Corridor signage, to visitor centers where they will get an overview of the Valley’s industrial story and learn about a particular chapter or theme. Visitors also will be directed to other sites and experiences in the Valley.

Literally hundreds of special places exist in the Corridor for residents and visitors to explore and enjoy. While many sites are open on a regular basis with professional staff, many others are operated by volunteers during limited hours or special events. The Commission aims to continue its support for developed sites as well as encourage smaller organizations to further develop their sites and programs. The Commission will encourage heritage sites, universities, businesses and tourism organizations to bring together cooperators and partners in the Corridor system to look for opportunities to collaborate and strengthen each other

and the Corridor as a whole. Regardless of a site’s current status, places that tell a particular theme are critical to supporting the overall interpretation of the Valley. Examples of some of the public heritage sites include:

- **Slater Mill Historic Site in Pawtucket stands as a Valley symbol to the American Industrial Revolution**
- **Willard House and Clock Museum in Grafton, Waters Farm in Sutton, the Daggett House in Pawtucket, the Smith-Appleby House in Smithfield, the John Hunt House and Hunt’s Mill in East Providence, and Lime Rock and Eleazer Arnold House in Lincoln are examples of early settlement in the Blackstone Valley**
- **E.N. Jenckes Store in East Douglas, Chase Farm in Lincoln, the Grafton Common, and the Job Armstrong Store in Chepachet reveal 19th century rural lifestyles**
- **Blackstone River State Park in Lincoln includes intact sections of the canal and towpath and soon an interpretive display at the Kelly House**
- **Chestnut Hill Meeting House in Millville, Federated Church in Blackstone, Friends Meeting House in Uxbridge were important civic and religious places**
- **Salisbury Mansion in Worcester, John Brown House in Providence and the Asa Waters Mansion in Millbury are indicators of wealth and industrial power**
- **Broad Meadow Brook Wildlife Sanctuary in Worcester, the Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Sanctuary in Smithfield, Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park, Purgatory Chasm State Park, Douglas, Sutton and Upton State Forests in Massachusetts, and Lincoln Woods State Park, Buck Hill Management Area and Pulaski Memorial Park in Rhode Island provide environmental education and opportunities for recreation**
- **Mill villages and the vernacular landscape of the Valley provide the setting for many historic sites while offering glimpses into the daily routines of village life, such as Rockdale in Northbridge, where portions of the mill complex house outlet stores, East Douglas with its Main Street of businesses and local eateries, and Valley Falls in Cumberland where mill ruins form a riverside park, and many more**
- **Festivals and the arts are also important to a person’s appreciation of the Valley’s culture - the Blackstone River Theatre, home to Pendragon in Cumberland hosts world-class traditional artists highlighting ethnic music and dance, Heritage Homecoming celebrates the heritage of the Valley by bringing together all of the Massachusetts communities and highlighting each community’s history, the Labor and Ethnic Heritage Festival held in**

Experiencing the Heritage Corridor

Pawtucket provides a forum for labor issues and a festive atmosphere for ethnic foods, music and dance; and various seasonal festivals held throughout the Corridor, educate, entertain and assist in perpetuating the Valley's heritage.

THE UNVEILING OF A NATIONAL STORY:

WAYS TO EXPERIENCE THE HERITAGE CORRIDOR

What is especially intriguing about opportunities to explore the Heritage Corridor is that it can be experienced in a variety of ways:

- **By bicycle, travelers will venture along the emerging Blackstone River Bikeway, which will be enhanced with interpretive signage and bike-path spurs to important sites;**
- **By watercraft, such as canoe, kayaks and excursion boats, visitors will explore scenic stretches of the Blackstone River rarely, if ever, seen by most visitors;**
- **By train, special excursion trains will follow scenic parts of the River's course along the Providence & Worcester Railroad line for special events and guided tours;**
- **By automobile, visitors will follow the Corridor's back roads and highways guided by directional signs to historic sites and visitor centers, especially its many mill villages which stand along the River;**
- **By foot, hikers can explore stretches of the River and Blackstone Canal along the Bikeway and Towpath.**

In all cases, special guides and new interpretive signage and exhibits can bring the story to life in ways which are unique to the Valley. Visitors can be transported from car to bike to canoe, sometimes making connections from one mode to the next via

livery services that would transport people to their next destination or back to a starting point where their vehicle may be parked. By exploring segments of the Valley over one or more days, visitors can experience the Valley's story in a fascinating variety of ways, including living history demonstrations, outdoor interpretive exhibits, indoor museums, and recreational adventures. Their itinerary can be strictly planned to take advantage of special annual events or festivals, or allowed to be more spontaneous.

It is important to note two dimensions that together help convey the value and uniqueness of telling the story. In terms of its value, the Blackstone Valley represents one of a series of historic sites around the country which together offer an invaluable opportunity to experience American history. This context is critical not only to understand how to best tell the story, but to understand its potential to draw a national audience-visitors from around the world can come to New England and learn the story of America's birth and early development.

To make the "story" more accessible to the general public and marketable to a national audience, the interpretation of the Blackstone Heritage Corridor has been organized into chronological

Unlike many single-site heritage destinations, various aspects of the Blackstone story can be experienced by automobile, bicycle pathway, riverway or, by railroad during special events.



Experiencing the Heritage Corridor

“chapters,” each tied to special places in the Valley where significant resources best convey a particular aspect of that story. Four primary visitor centers located at Worcester, Uxbridge, Woonsocket and Pawtucket will serve several functions. As a group, they will provide an organizational framework for the Corridor. This will require that each visitor center site be developed with some level of consistency so that they are understood as part of one overall system. Secondly, each visitor center site will provide a physical and thematic focus for the chapter it represents. These centers will provide programmatic devices, such as visitor guides and marketing brochures, that will orient visitors to this story-book approach, allowing them to experience various chapters over several days and/or visits. Lastly, the communities at which these core projects are located, have made a commitment to heritage preservation and development which has in turn, led to revitalized downtowns, riverfront parks, transportation improvements and expanded business opportunities. These critical, value-added, developments are very important in making the Valley a place that will attract residents and visitors alike.

THE STORY: FROM BIRTH TO DECLINE TO RENEWAL

CHAPTER 1,

The Birth of the American Industrial Revolution, begins at the south end of the Heritage Corridor where the seeds of technological innovation and capital wealth first took root to create a revolutionary transition from hand-made to machine-made goods. The central figure in this saga is Samuel Slater who is credited for having engineered America's first successful cotton-spinning mill (1793). His wood-frame mill building in Pawtucket still stands as the flagship of cultural resources in the Blackstone Valley-site of the first successful attempt to adapt English manufacturing technology to American manufacturing needs. The Slater Mill Historic Site, and the Blackstone Heritage Corridor Visitor Center located across the street, will focus on the Corridor's “headline” story: the founding period of industrialization and its profound ramifications for American history. The Visitor Center, in particular, will offer an overview of the Industrial Revolution and orientation for visitors to the historic and cultural sites throughout the Valley. Other ongoing features and special events programming at Slater Mill — outdoor exhibits, machinery demonstrations and seasonal festivals such as the Labor and Ethnic Heritage Festival — will augment the Center's well-rounded



The interpretation of the Corridor's headline story has been organized around a story-book approach where special visitor sites convey the primary messages from each chapter of the American Industrial Revolution.

Samuel Slater, credited with having built America's first successful cotton-spinning mill in 1790, is the central figure in the Corridor's Birth of the Industrial Revolution story.



Experiencing the Heritage Corridor

CHAPTER 2,

The Early Transformations tells the story of a changing way of life in the Valley's physical form — how people lived, their settlement patterns, culture, and evolving transportation systems — that all occurred within a relatively brief period of time following the establishment of Slater Mill. The changes reflected the early growth of the textile industry as played out through transformations of production, labor and new technology. Lifestyles shifted from agrarian ways where work was influenced by nature's rhythms, to factory shifts where lives were dictated by time clocks. The culture of these new villages was shaped by the demands of the textile production. Mechanization and technological advances altered the landscape with new modes of transportation: early dirt roads were paved into regional turnpikes, and canals were abandoned for more efficient railroads. In time, small mills grew into larger complexes as innovations in production allowed larger output and higher demand required plant expansion. In Woonsocket's Market Square, The Museum of Work and Culture, located in a renovated mill, features exhibits about the saga of immigration, labor and the battle for cultural survival. Exhibits immerse visitors in the French-Canadian experience — visitors experience a Quebec farmhouse, a parochial school, "triple-decker" house, and a union labor hall. The museum also serves as a key visitor orientation point for the Corridor. Main Street 2000 and the City of Woonsocket have used the museum development as a key element in their revitalization efforts of the Downtown. The Blackstone Bikeway will also connect through here. Planned outdoor exhibits and other landscape elements will enliven the surrounding area. A French-Canadian inspired Jubilee (celebration) and seasonal river tours on The Blackstone Valley Explorer will draw visitors and offer opportunities for reinforcing the story line.



The John Brown House, Providence, RI

orientation mission for visitors. Ongoing preservation efforts along Main Street and the River continue to be an important element in shaping an attractive atmosphere for residents and visitors.

The story extends south to Providence which served as the Blackstone Valley's seaport and whose Yankee merchants provided much of the financial backing for the development of factory-based manufacturing. Interpretive signs along the Providence Riverwalk detail the evolution of Providence from Colonial times to the heights of the industrial era. Benefit Street features the homes of some of the prominent mill owners of the Blackstone Valley such as Sullivan Dorr, Wilbur Kelly and Edward Carrington. Chief among these financiers were the Brown brothers including Moses Brown who provided much of the investment capital to fund Slater's Mill and John Brown who as early as 1796 proposed building a canal along the Blackstone River. Currently serving as a visitor site, the Rhode Island Historical Society's John Brown House offers a representative example of the wealth and influence that these merchant-investors had on emerging industrial enterprises. Collaborative special events and stronger interpretive connections to the birth of the American Industrial Revolution will be the catalyst to draw Providence visitors into the Blackstone Valley.



The Early Transformations chapter explores the revolution in life styles that many New Englanders experienced as farm families traded their plows for textile machines.

Moffett Mill (1812), owned by the Town of Lincoln, is a rare surviving example of an early water-powered, machine shop built during the first wave of the Blackstone's industrialization (1790-1820).



Exhibits in the Kelly House will convey the story of how the Valley's landscape was transformed by industrialization. Physical reminders of these changes are evident throughout the Blackstone River State Park, where the house is located.

Several elements of the Valley's transformation are illustrated by the cultural landscape at the Kelly House and other resources of the Blackstone River State Park in Lincoln. Wilbur Kelly, a former sea captain turned mill owner, helped develop the Blackstone Canal. The mill manager's house is all that remains intact from the early mill complex located along the Blackstone Canal. Recently restored by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, the house will have exhibits conveying the changing industrial landscape. The Transformations theme will feature transportation technology, shifts from maritime to industrial trade, and changes from agrarian settings to mill villages. These, in combination with remnants of the mill, intact sections of the Blackstone Canal and towpath, and outdoor exhibits will offer excellent opportunities for uncovering clues to the story in this setting. The opportunity to experience this site from a different perspective will be available with the completion of the first section of the Blackstone Bikeway here.

The Great Road Historic District, which connected Providence with Worcester generations before the Blackstone Canal made the same commercial link in the 1820s, is a fine example of one of America's earliest regional connections. Constructed between the 1660s and 1683, the 4.5 mile stretch in Lincoln, RI, is lined with several historic buildings, including Moffett Mill (1812), the Eleazer Arnold House (1687), the Chase Farm (c.1867), and the Hannaway Blacksmith Shop (1870-95), which convey the early industrial underpinnings of a largely agricultural landscape. Better access among Great Road historic sites would enhance the experience of this cultural landscape.

Slatersville, which is considered the first planned industrial village in the United States, offers visitors a well-preserved example of the emerging factory-based life style. Two historic commercial buildings, a church and common, mill housing and much of the early mill complex remain. Slatersville is an excellent example of an intact village whereby wisely placed dollars by various entities and a bit of creativity could result in a rejuvenated village, where people could once again reside in the village and work in the mill. The village offers excellent interpretive opportunities along the river or in the mill. While outdoor exhibitry will be installed at three site locations, a need still exists to create visitor amenities and a more festive atmosphere for telling the Slatersville story. Nearby, the Blackstone Gorge offers special recreational opportunities to explore the last remaining stretch of natural or "pre-industrial" river before the Blackstone was extensively dammed and its wild appearance lost.



The Arnold House, operated by the Society for the Preservation for New England Antiquities, provides a dramatic contrast between the rural, agrarian life styles that prevailed in New England before the textile industry and the mill villages that followed.

Experiencing the Heritage Corridor

CHAPTER 3,

From Farm to Factory captures the story of an agrarian society and how it was changed by the industrial revolution — first by the early mill laborers leaving the rural environs in search of better opportunities, and then by providing the raw materials, continuing an interdependence of economies well into the 20th Century. The Blackstone Canal plays a supporting role in this story as key in reinforcing the relationship between farm and factory. Farm goods and raw materials were shipped to the mills, while finished products were sent via canal to marketplaces. Excellent canal features and varied landscapes offer the visitor wonderful opportunities to experience an intact section of the Canal and Towpath.

At River Bend Farm, which is part of the Blackstone River & Canal Heritage State Park in Uxbridge, a recently renovated timber frame barn houses one of the Corridor's main Visitor Centers offering people a warm welcome and Corridor-wide orientation. Permanent exhibits are being developed which set the context for understanding the major changes of the industrial revolution by describing pre-industrial life in the Blackstone Valley, an agrarian society living in surprising conditions where every member of the farm family worked towards a “comfortable subsistence.” The story line continues by examining how industrialization changed these farmers' lives, even as they provided for the mills and growing mill communities. Included in that story is the Blackstone Canal, which played an important role in developing the Valley's early industrial economy. A towpath trail connects the Stanley Woolen Mill to the south with canal-related and natural sites to the north. Further south along the River in Millville, the



The Blackstone Canal played a supporting role in the Farm to Factory story, reinforcing the production relationship between raw farm materials, like wool, which were shipped by canal to the mills, and finished mill products, like blankets, which were shipped to country stores where farmers could have purchased them.



Waters Farm in Sutton offers a particularly picturesque setting for special events and festivals that showcase the farmer's role in the larger industrial story.



The Blackstone Gorge reveals the “wild” features of the pre-industrial river before the Blackstone was dammed for power and its untamed appearance was largely lost.



Chapter 4 celebrates The Flowering of the Industry, the high point of textile manufacturing during which the region's productivity in yarns and cloth and finished goods, like clothing and blankets, exceeded that of any other place in the world.

Millville Lock is the most intact of the Blackstone Canal's few surviving remnants of marvelous stone construction and engineering. The Blackstone Valley Explorer already takes visitors to the Lock. Locks were critical elements in a boat's ability to traverse a long canal and river whose elevation often rose and fell dozens of feet over the course of its route.



Hopedale is an exceptional company-built town where the social and religious ideals of its founders, the Draper family, inspired its unique housing, social policies and community programs.

Perhaps no better place in the valley allows visitors to experience agrarian life from the 18th century through today, than at Waters Farm in Sutton, a comprehensive farming complex that supported seven generations of the Waters family. Owned by the Town and preserved by Waters Farm Preservation, Inc., an active membership provides house tours, blacksmithing demonstrations, shingle milling, interpretation of early American crafts and sponsors a successful "Farm Days" event each fall.

CHAPTER 4,

The Flowering of the Industry, celebrates the high point of textile manufacturing during which the region's productivity in yarns and cloth and finished goods, like clothing and blankets, exceeded that of any other place in the world. The architectural legacy of this period is, perhaps, best captured by the company town which was often paternalistic built, managed and maintained. Two of the Valley's best intact examples are Hopedale and Whitinsville, both famed for their leadership as textile machinery manufacturers. The core of Hopedale village offers the visitor an exceptional example of a company town where the religious ideals of the founders, rooted in the settlement's



Once the world's leading center of textile machinery manufacturing, Whitinsville still preserves diverse examples of company-built housing, schools, churches, social halls, and municipal buildings.

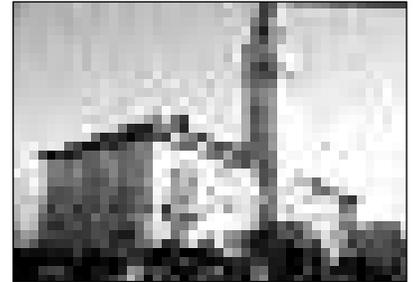
utopian origins, inspired its social policies and community programs. The turn of the century company-built homes, which housed both workers and managers, are one of the Valley's most remarkable architectural ensembles, sited artfully in several cases to take advantage of views over the mill pond. In addition to several outdoor wayside exhibits, this chapter of the story could possibly be told at one of the civic buildings, the Draper Mill or the Little Red Shop, located on the Mill Pond, which currently contains exhibits on textile machinery and the Draper family.

The architectural forms and geography of Whitinsville presents a remarkably complete picture of a company town. Once the world center of textile machinery manufacturing, this former family-owned town still preserves diverse examples of Whitin-built housing, schools, churches, municipal buildings, dairy farm, library and recreational center. An attraction or exhibits which tell the story of benevolence could be located in one of the Town's historic buildings, symbols of its industrial prime.

Experiencing the Heritage Corridor

CHAPTER 5,

The Enduring Legacy, which focuses on Worcester, covers several aspects of the textile industry's effects, which left their imprint on communities throughout the Valley. The rich surviving architectural legacy of Worcester best epitomizes the private and public prosperity created by textile-making between the 1860s and 1920s. The cultural legacy encompasses the many ethnic groups which settled into distinct neighborhoods where folkways and cultural symbols still persist. The environmental legacy of the industry is still unfolding in numerous places along the Blackstone. An especially striking example in south Worcester focuses on the resilience of working communities trying to reclaim the Blackstone River from industrial spoils and revitalize neglected mill sites through progressive initiatives. The Route 146 project, which highlights today's technology, will combine elements of greenway development, including a section of the Blackstone Bikeway, bio-engineering to restore wetland features, and landscape elements celebrating the Valley's transportation history.



The rich surviving architectural legacy of Worcester captures the private and public prosperity created by the textile industry and other commerce between the 1860s and 1920s.

The centerpiece of this program would be the Northern Gateway Visitor Center for a site to be determined in Quinsigamond Village. An opportunity exists here to create a "critical mass" of visitor amenities which would take advantage of its easy access to and from the Massachusetts Turnpike and as a gateway to downtown Worcester and the corridor leading into the Valley. Like the Blackstone Heritage Corridor Visitor Center in Pawtucket, the site would primarily serve as the gateway center for tourist information and orientation to the Heritage Corridor at its northern end. The site would also be tied to the Blackstone Bikeway route and a restored greenway, or wildlife and natural river area. A collaborative approach would need to be developed between various partners, such as the Corridor Commission, the Worcester Historical Museum, the Central Massachusetts Tourist Council, the Blackstone River Valley Visitors Bureau, the Broad Meadow Brook Wildlife Sanctuary of the Massachusetts Audubon Society, the City of Worcester, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management, the Massachusetts Highway Department, and the New England Science Center. Once Union Station is restored, it is anticipated that a portion of the ground-floor central lobby space will be designated for heritage-oriented exhibits, perhaps focusing upon the transportation history of the Valley, and some visitor services.



Barbed wire was part of the industrial legacy of Worcester, manufactured in Quinsigamond Village.

The station will also be the northern terminus for the Blackstone Bikeway, which will extend along the river corridor as far south as Providence, RI.

Worcester Historical Museum offers a splendid collection and excellent interpretation of Worcester's historical development from a small country market town to an incredibly productive manufacturing center and transportation hub which became New England's second largest city after Boston. Its gallery of changing exhibits often focuses upon the legacy, both architectural, social and cultural, that its diversified economy produced through the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

At Broad Meadow Brook Wildlife Sanctuary and Visitor Information Center, the story of river recovery can be told through exhibits which explore watershed dynamics and industry's impacts on our waterways. Programs offered by Massachusetts Audubon Society provide tools to citizens to help them improve waterways where they live and work. The New England Science Center offers exhibits and interpretive workshops that focus upon advances in science and new technology which have the potential to help transform the post-industrial economy of the Blackstone Valley.



Union Station, Worcester, c.1911



The Northern Gateway Visitor Center in Worcester's Quinsigamond Village will take advantage of its easy access from the Massachusetts Turnpike and downtown Worcester.